

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

- 1. (Original)** A process for producing an aliphatic polyester, comprising: subjecting a cyclic ester containing water in excess of 80 ppm as an initiator or/and a molecular weight-adjusting agent to ring-opening polymerization based on a total proton concentration in the cyclic ester as an index, and compounding a resultant aliphatic polyester with a carboxyl group-capping agent.
- 2. (Original)** A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the carboxyl group-capping agent is selected from the group consisting of monocarbodiimides, polycarbodiimides, oxazolines, oxazines and epoxy compounds.
- 3. (Original)** A production process according to Claim 1, wherein the carboxyl group-capping agent is a monocarbodiimide.
- 4. (Currently Amended)** A production process according to ~~any one of Claims 1 – 3~~ Claim 1, wherein a total proton concentration including more than 80 ppm of water is adjusted by adding water to a purified cyclic ester containing at most 60 ppm of water.
- 5. (Currently Amended)** A production process according to ~~any one of Claims 1 – 4~~ Claim 1, wherein the total proton concentration in the cyclic ester is calculated based on a total of hydroxycarboxylic acid compounds and water contained as impurities in the cyclic ester.
- 6. (Original)** A production process according to Claim 5, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acids comprise an α -hydroxycarboxylic acid and linear oligomer of α -hydroxycarboxylic acid.
- 7. (Currently Amended)** A production process according to ~~any one of Claims 1 – 6~~ Claim 1, wherein the total proton concentration in the cyclic ester is adjusted in a range of above 0.09 mol% and below 2.0 mol%.

8. (Currently Amended) A production process according to ~~any one of Claims 1—7~~ Claim 1, wherein the cyclic ester comprises glycolide alone or a mixture of at least 60 wt.% of glycolide and at most 40 wt.% another cyclic monomer capable of ring-opening copolymerization with glycolide.

9. (Currently Amended) A production process according to ~~any one of Claims 1—8~~ Claim 1, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total proton concentration therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst and then the molten cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization to precipitate a resultant polymer.

10. (Original) A production process according to Claim 9, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total proton concentration therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst, then the molten cyclic ester is transferred to a polymerization apparatus equipped with a plurality of tubes, and the cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization in an air-tight state within each tube.

11. (Original) A production process according to Claim 10, wherein the plurality of tubes comprise tubes having both ends that can be open and closed.

12. (Original) A production process according to Claim 9, wherein the cyclic ester after adjusting the total proton concentration therein is melted under heating in the presence of a catalyst in a melting vessel, then the molten cyclic ester is subjected to ring-opening polymerization in a reaction vessel equipped with a stirrer, and then a resultant polymer is once cooled to be solidified and subject to solid phase polymerization below the melting point of the polymer.